

FIRST POLITICAL
VICTORY

DRAWER

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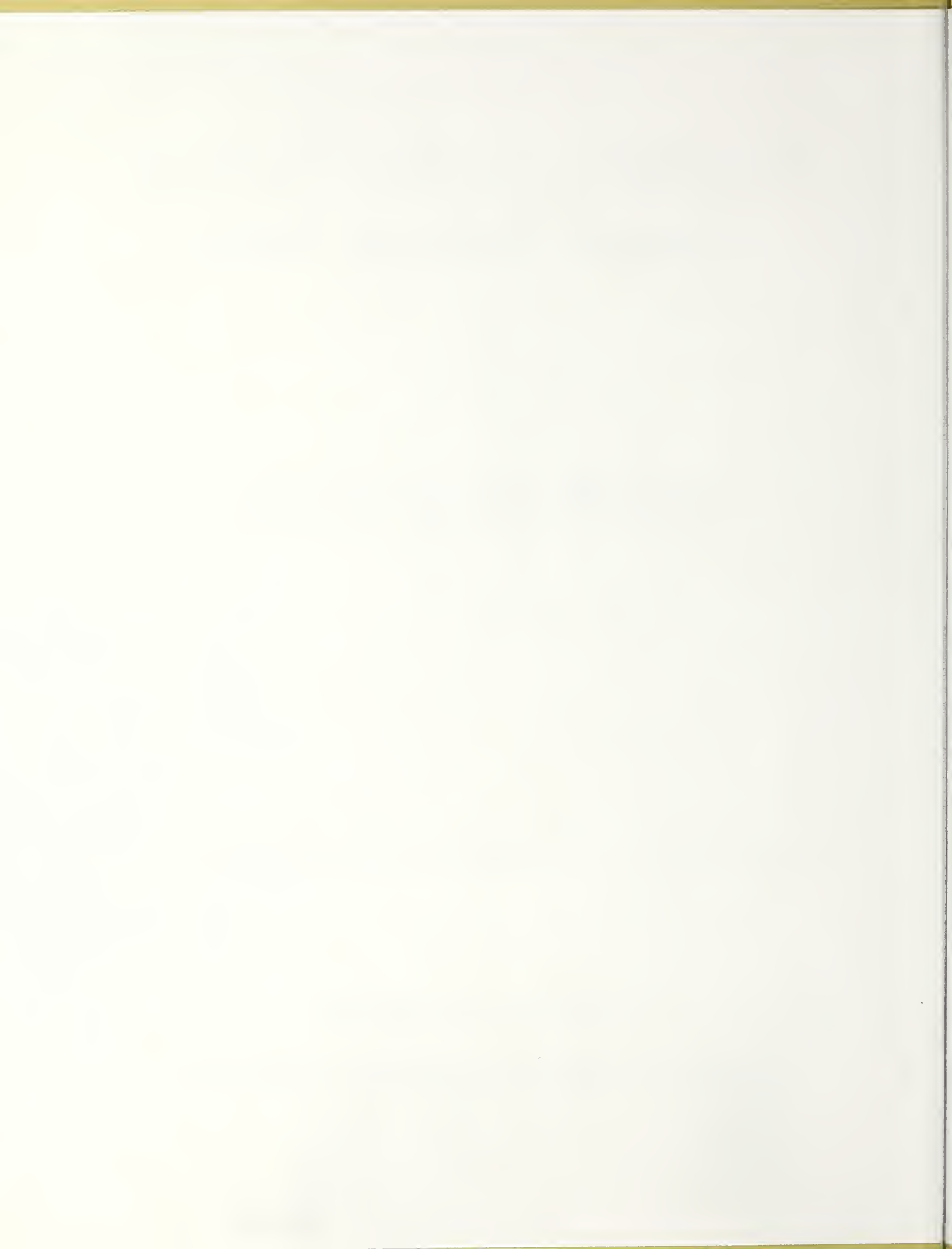


Abraham Lincoln's Political Career Through 1860

First Political Victory

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



EARLY CAREER IN POLITICS

"Do you suppose," Lincoln once wrote, in a letter to a friend, "that I should ever have got into notice if I had waited to be hunted up and pushed forward by older men? . . . The way for a young man to rise, is to improve himself every way he can, never suspecting that anybody wishes to hinder him."

Lincoln was always delightfully modest; but it is a grave error to suppose that he was too modest to ask for public office, or that he blushinglly waited to have honors thrust upon him. He knew how to "push" himself—this was his great art—without appearing obtrusive or pretentious.

He never held an office which he did not actively seek. He longed for the Presidency quite as ardently as he did for a seat in the Legislature in his days of handbill politics. His nomination, which appeared so providential, would scarcely have been possible but for his previous political career, his known integrity and ability, and his peculiar position with reference to the vital issues of the moment; but it was ambitiously sought, and it could hardly have been secured without the valiant efforts of such master politicians as David Davis, Norman B. Judd, Leonard Swett, Jesse W. Fell, Stephen T. Logan, and a score of other Illinois men of that era of great politicians.

Lincoln's political ambition took definite shape in his candidacy for the Legislature, when he was but 23 years old. So far as known "older men" did not suggest his candidacy; indeed, a number of them had similar aspirations, and it was left to Lincoln to suggest the matter himself. In his famous hand-bill he proved his astuteness as a politician by appropriating as his platform a proposition of vital interest to his legislative district and one of great popularity therein—the navigation of the Sangamon River. He was beaten in this initial race, but so small a thing as defeat did not in the least deter him from persistently "pushing" himself for the same office two years later, with gratifying success.

Files of newspapers of the period furnish evidence of his reputation by 1840. They show that he stood among the first of the public men of the State. "Mr. Lincoln, one of the Presidential Electors for this State," said the Quincy Whig May 28, 1840 (and the extract is here reproduced for the first time), "is 'going it with a perfect rush' in some of the interior counties. Thus far the Locofocos have not been able to start a man that can hold a candle to him in political debate. All of heir crack nags that have entered the lists against him have come off the field crippled or broken down. He is now wending his way north."

In the Whig several months later are found some interesting character sketches of prom-

inent politicians of the day. They were contained in letters from Springfield, the Legislature being in session, and were written by "A Lobby Member." He wrote:

"Abraham Lincoln of Sangamon," wrote the correspondent, "is emphatically a man of high standing, being about six feet four in his stockings, slender, and loosely built. He is, I suppose, over 30 years old, has been in the Legislature repeatedly, and was run as one of the Whig Electors at the late election. Mr. L. is a self-made man, and one of the ablest, whether as lawyer or legislator, in the State. As a speaker he is characterized by a sincerity, frankness, and evident honesty calculated to win the attention and gain the confidence of the hearer." (From Quincy Whig, Jan. 9, 1841, now first reproduced.)

From the close of his legislative career until his election to the Presidency his only important public office, except the purely honorary one of Presidential Elector, was that of Congressman. One other office, however, he did hold in that period, and it is one which has been overlooked by the biographers. He was a member of the Town Council—a circumstance showing that, while he never pretended to seek office as a public duty, he was quite willing, after political honors had been showered thick upon him, to serve his community in an office which offered neither honors nor emoluments.

Lincoln's characteristics as a young politician were precisely those of his later years. When he sought an office—which was quite frequently—he was frank enough to tell the people which particular office he desired. It was not his habit to shift the responsibility for his ambitions to that mythical legion, the candidate's "friends." He believed that the office should not be required always to "seek the man"—the man being generally able to render valuable assistance to the office in its strenuous search.

It is difficult to say what contributed most to Lincoln's early political success, for he possessed all of the qualities of a politician of the highest type—an attractive personality, vast common sense, simplicity of manner and speech, energy, honesty, courage, and candor. All of these things were potent with the plain, honest, brave, and sensible people of the pioneer era.

Nevertheless, they did not by instinct discover great men in their midst, and it is perhaps well that Lincoln did not "wait to be hunted up and pushed forward by older men."

J. MCCAN DAVIS.

[Mr. J. McCan Davis of Springfield, Ill., is an authority on the early life of Lincoln, and was an extensive contributor to the series of Lincoln papers published by McClure's Magazine in 1906-'08.]

Chicago Tribune
2/12/1900

In 1834, when Lincoln was a candidate for the Legislature, he called on a certain farmer to ask for his support. He found him in the hay field, and was urging his cause when the dinner bell sounded. The farmer invited him to dinner, but he declined politely, and added:

"If you will let me have the scythe while you are gone I will mow round the field a couple of times."

When the farmer returned he found three rows neatly mowed. The scythe lay against the gate post, but Lincoln had disappeared.

Nearly 30 years afterward the farmer and his wife, now grown old, were at a White House reception, and stood waiting in line to shake hands with the President.

"When they got near him in the line," says Judge Landis, "Lincoln saw them, and, calling an aide, told him to take them to one of the small parlors, where he would see them as soon as he got through the handshaking. Much surprised, the old couple were led away. Presently Mr. Lincoln came in, and, greeting them with an outstretched hand and a warm smile, called them by name.

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed the farmer, "that you remember me after all these years?"

"I certainly do," said the President, and he went on to recall the day he had mowed round the farmer's timothy field.

"Yes, that's so," said the old man, still in astonishment. "I found the field mowed and the scythe leaning up against the gate post. But I have always wanted to ask you one thing."

"What is that?" asked Mr. Lincoln.

"I always wanted to ask you, Mr. President, what you did with the whetstone?"

"Lincoln" smoothed his hair back from his brows a moment, in deep thought; then his face lighted up.

"Yes, I remember now," he said. "I put the whetstone on top of the high gate post."

"An" when he got back to Illinois again the farmer found the whetstone on top of the gate post, where it had lain for more than 25 years."

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

No. 278

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August 6, 1934

LINCOLN'S FIRST POLITICAL VICTORY

The centennial of Abraham Lincoln's first political victory is of sufficient importance to recall the events leading up to his early success at the polls. On the fourth day of August, 1834, he was one of the four successful representatives of Sangamon County elected to the Ninth General Assembly of Illinois.

The first announcement of Lincoln's decision to run for the legislature appeared in the *Sangamon Journal* for April 25, 1834, as follows:

"We are authorized to state that A. Lincoln of New Salem is a candidate for representative for this county."

Nearly two months before this announcement, Lincoln participated in a meeting at New Salem which was called to discuss state politics. The *Sangamon Journal* for March 15, 1834, gave a report of the proceedings from which this paragraph is presented:

"Resolved that we will use every effort to promote the election of General Henry to the first office of this state at the next August election and we recommend him to our fellow citizens as a suitable person for the office . . ." The resolutions were ordered forwarded to the *Sangamon Journal* and signed by Bowling Green, the chairman, and A. Lincoln, the secretary.

By the time of the election in August, thirteen candidates had signified their intention of running for the general assembly, four of which were to be elected. They were John Dawson, Abraham Lincoln, William Carpenter, John T. Stuart, Richard Quinton, Andrew McCormick, William Alvey, Thos. M. Neal, Shadrick J. Campbell, James Shepherd, James Baker, John Durley, and William Kendall. The first four were successful and the others who also ran followed in the order named, William Kendall being low man.

The election returns as first reported in the *Sangamon Journal* gave Abraham Lincoln 1,373 votes and John Dawson 1,370 votes. The following week, however, the *Journal* announced that "an error occurred in stating the number of votes received by John Dawson in last week's paper. He received 1,390 votes for representative being the highest number given for any one individual for that office." Lincoln's official count was 1,376. Many of the early Lincoln histories give the vote as first printed in the *Journal* which is responsible for the claim that Lincoln polled the largest number of

votes. In the autobiographical sketch which Lincoln prepared for Scripps he states that he received "the highest vote cast for any candidate." This same statement is made in the campaign biography prepared for Scripps and also in Howell's biography of Lincoln.

The large complimentary vote cast for Lincoln in 1834 was foreshadowed in 1832 when he ran for the office of representative. Although defeated in the county, he received all but seven of the 277 votes cast in his own precinct.

Howell's biography, as corrected by Abraham Lincoln, which has become one of our most valuable sources, submits positive evidence about Lincoln's early political affiliations in Illinois. It stated that "Parties, at this time (1832), were distinguished as Adams parties and Jackson parties, and in Lincoln's county the Jackson men were vastly in the ascendant. He was a staunch Adams man, and, being comparatively unknown in the remoter parts of the county, was defeated." Lincoln corrected this statement about his party allegiance. He crossed out the reference to "Adams parties" and wrote in the text "Anti-Jackson." Where he was called a "staunch Adams man" he changed it to "Anti-Jackson or Clay."

We have Lincoln's own statement that he voted for Henry Clay for president in 1832, but just when he became an avowed follower of Clay it is difficult to determine. Whom he favored in 1830 for Illinois state officers is not known. Tradition has always placed him in a Jackson environment in Indiana; and Lamon, Lincoln biographer, infers that his change to the Clay ranks occurred in Illinois as shown in the following paragraph:

"The Democrats were divided into 'whole-hog men' and 'nominal Jackson men'; the former being thoroughly devoted to the fortunes and principles of their leader, while the latter were willing to trim a little for the sake of popular support. It is probable that Mr. Lincoln might be fairly classed as a 'nominal Jackson man,' although the precise character of some of the views he then held, or is supposed to have held, on national questions, is involved in considerable doubt."

It is accepted generally that Abraham Lincoln's father was a Jacksonian Democrat as was also Ratcliff Boone, the most prominent politician in southern Indiana during the period the Lincolns lived there. It is very likely that

in his earlier days Abraham was brought up in a Jacksonian atmosphere but for some reason broke away from the political traditions of his father and kinsmen.

According to Lamon, Lincoln's Indiana environment was wholly Jacksonian. He claims William Jones, for whom Lincoln clerked the last winter he lived in the state, was "an ardent Jackson man himself, and he imparted to Abe the true faith as delivered by that great democratic apostle; and the traces of his teaching were never wholly effaced from Mr. Lincoln's mind. While he remained at Gentryville his politics accorded with Mr. Jones's, and even after he had turned Whig in Illinois John Hanks tells us he wanted to whip a man for traducing Jackson." Dennis Hanks, although greatly confused as to when Abraham Lincoln became a Whig, admits that it was Jones who exerted the greatest political influence over Lincoln.

Lamon is in error about William Jones's politics as we now have evidence he was a Clay man. The *Evansville Daily Journal* of July 19, 1860, makes this statement:

"William Jones is an old citizen of the country who has taken little active part in politics since the Clay and Polk campaign and who on learning the defeat of his favorite in that memorable contest was for several days incapacitated for attending to his usual business. He appeals to his friends, to give old Abe their undivided support."

As early as 1825 and 1826 the *Western Sun* of Vincennes published eighteen long articles by or about Henry Clay. These were undoubtedly made accessible to Lincoln and probably furnished him with his first introduction to the great statesman.

In a biographical sketch which Lincoln prepared in 1859 he made the statement: "Always a Whig in politics." In the famous debate with Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois, he referred to Clay as "my beau ideal of a statesman, the man for whom I fought all my humble life."

It does not appear as if there should be any confusion about the political atmosphere in which Lincoln moved previous to his first election to public office one hundred years ago, August 4, 1834.

Of this fact we may feel certain: that when Abraham Lincoln left Indiana for Illinois in 1830, just at the time he became twenty-one years of age, he was a follower of Henry Clay.

UNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1936

Women's Suffrage Urged By Lincoln 100 Years Ago

'Honest Abe's' 1836 Campaign Circular Favoring
Votes for 'Females' Revealed by Washing-
ton Jurist.

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8.—One hundred years ago Abraham Lincoln declared for women's suffrage, and his birthday next Wednesday will be the anniversary of one of the oddest incidents of the suffrage fight.

The story was told today by Judge Carl Hyatt, in charge of juvenile cases for the Justice Department, whose 72-year-old father, James L. Hyatt, of Asheville, N. C., introduced the first suffrage resolution in the South.

"Father, as a young legislator, was greatly inspired by Lincoln's early record," said Judge Hyatt. "In his extensive readings on Lincoln, he came across a campaign circular, one of Lincoln's when running for the Lower House of the Illinois Legislature in 1836, and addressed to the editor of the Sangamon County Journal.

"I've a copy of it here in my

desk—it goes this way—'To the Editor of the Journal: In your paper of last Saturday I see a communication over the signature 'Many Voters' in which the candidates who are announced in the Journal are called upon to 'show their hands.' Agreed. Here's mine. I go for all sharing the privileges of the Government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no mean excluding females).

"It was dated 'New Salem, June 13, 1836,' that was before even the women suffrage pioneers got started.

"Father thought Lincoln's argument was logical, so on Lincoln's birthday, 1897, he asked unanimous consent to appear before the North Carolina Senate. His fellow Senators thought they'd be kind to a young fellow who wanted practice

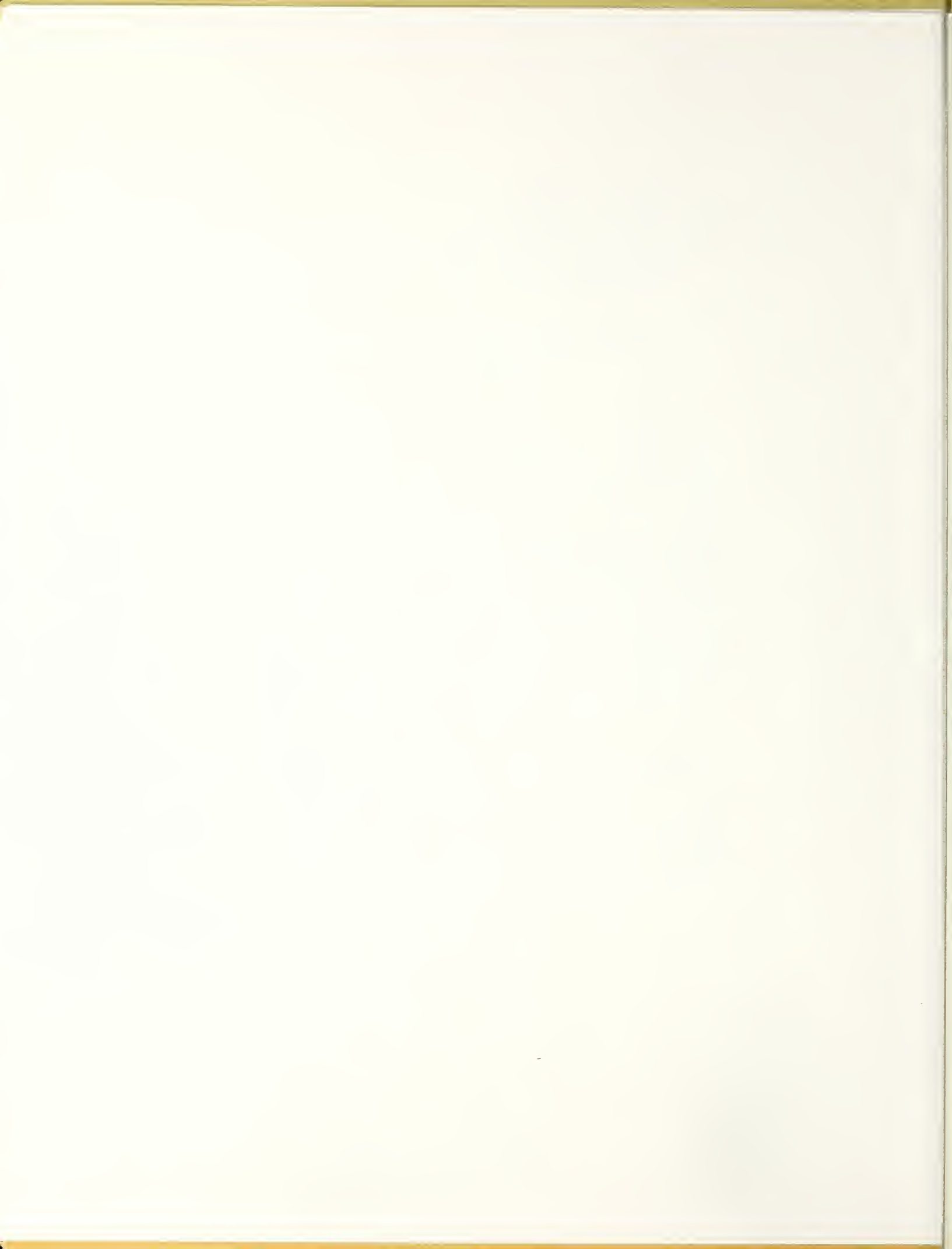
in making speeches, and gave him the floor. They'd never have done it if they'd known what was in his mind.

Proposal Branded "Mad."

"Father's speech urging women's suffrage for North Carolina was followed by one in which a Senator said his proposal was so mad, so impossible, so insane, it shouldn't

be dignified by being referred to the committee on Constitutional amendments, but should be referred to its 'proper committee' on insane asylums. And that was the committee in which it was buried.

"Twenty-four years later he was a member of the same body when the suffrage amendment passed two to one. But even then, the North Carolina house killed it."





Lincoln Lore

January, 1981

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.
Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1715

The Political Life Of New Salem, Illinois

Lincoln's earliest political surroundings have always somewhat baffled scholars. The reasons for this are many and varied. Inadequate documentation and Whiggery's marginal existence as almost a subculture in Democratic Illinois are two factors. A third, perhaps more important, is the unpopularity of the Whig party among historians. Much of the best work on Lincoln was produced at a time when historians were prejudiced against the Whigs. Most writers liked Lincoln well enough, but they disliked the party to which he devoted the greater part of his political life (he was a Whig twice as long as he was a Republican).

Only recently have historians come to have a greater appreciation for the importance, one might almost say the vision, of the Whig party. G.S. Boritt comes immediately to mind for those who work in the Lincoln field, but there are others, such as Daniel Walker Howe, who have been giving the Whigs a fairer shake. This new work has gained attention and made historians think. It has not yet stemmed the tide, and more students should be reevaluating Lincoln's early political environment.

All in all, the effect of the modern unpopularity of Whiggery on the study of Lincoln's early career has been to keep the number of such studies small and to emphasize Lincoln's personal popularity. Nowhere has this emphasis been more pronounced than in the work on Lincoln in New Salem.

Studies of New Salem rarely focus on the political life of the town in which Lincoln forged his early career. Historians have generally shied away from characterizing the town as Whig or Democratic. Most say only that it was democratic (with a small "d") and that this openness accounts for

Lincoln's opportunity to have a political career despite his "defective" education, his inability to settle into a successful vocation, and his penniless and debt-ridden economic status. The beginnings of Lincoln's career in the Illinois legislature seem to represent a triumph of personal popularity and of the American political system. That it was also a triumph of one political party over another rarely gains mention, much less careful consideration.

Here inadequate documentation is *not* a problem. The opportunity to understand Lincoln's political career before the 1850s is probably greater than for any other of America's political giants. Illinois's voters showed their preference at the polls orally, and clerks carefully marked how each citizen voted. Therefore, we know in Lincoln's case precisely—by name—who voted for him and against him. Knowledge like this is unobtainable even for twentieth-century politicians or contemporary elections. We know for sure who voted for Lincoln, something we can never know in the cases of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, or even Ronald Reagan.

Who Voted for Lincoln?

The records do not exist for every precinct in every election, but a substantial number have survived. The poll books for the election of August 1, 1836, in New Salem precinct still exist. Lincoln was running for reelection to the Illinois House of Representatives. Sangamon County, of which New Salem was still a part, was to choose seven Representatives, and each voter could vote for as many as seven House candidates. Voters also chose a Congressman, a state senator, and

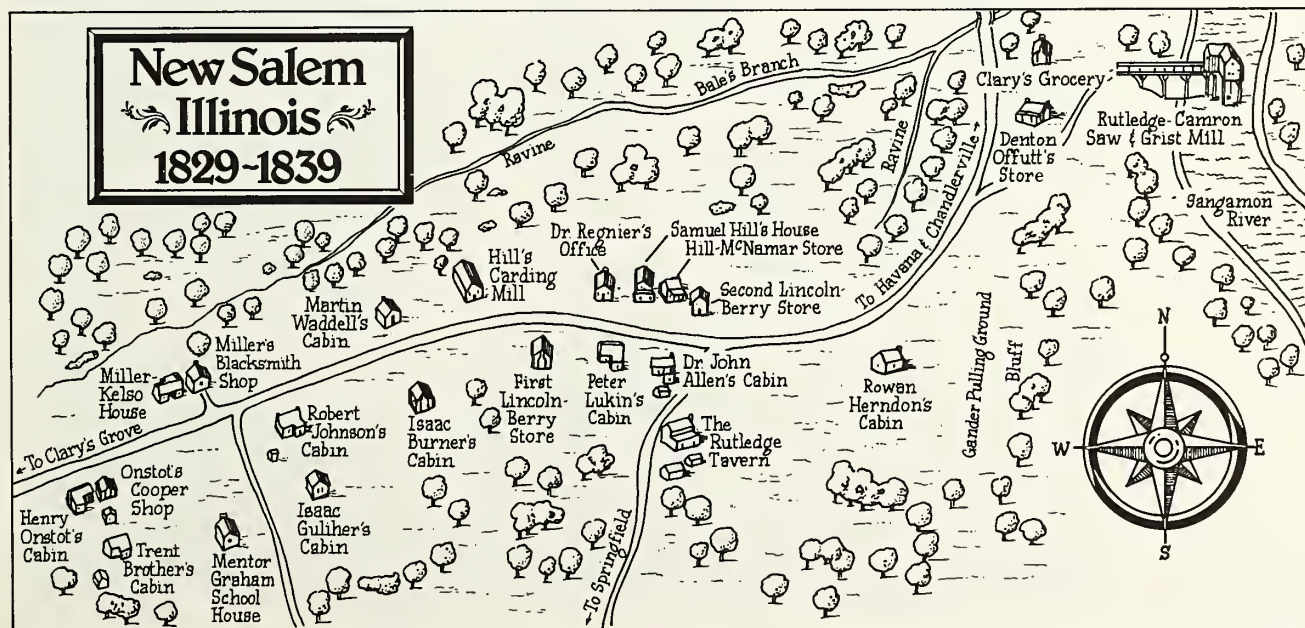


FIGURE 1. Map of Lincoln's home town from 1831 to 1837.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum



first frontier. They were rough, fun-loving, and boisterous men of rather unsteady habits. Lincoln, the artisans, doctors, and businessmen of New Salem were men of the more settled second frontier. Lincoln's ability to capture the friendship of the Clary's Grove boys has always gained considerable attention from his biographers. First, it really was important. As members of his company in the Black Hawk War in 1832, the Clary's Grove boys had a hand in Lincoln's first political success: his election as captain of the unit. Second, the way he gained their respect—the famous wrestling match with Jack Armstrong—is the anecdotal stuff of which readable biographies are made. Unlike some important events, this one offers the bonus of making a good story.

Finally, Lincoln's friendship with the Clary's Grove boys has been the focus of much attention because of the peculiar importance of the American West to historians in the period when much of the great writing on Lincoln occurred. In the 1890s, Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" identified American democracy and individualism with the West. The frontier was supposed to be the cutting edge of the experience that made America, America and not a pale imitation of the European culture from which most Americans stemmed. For Lincoln to capture the hearts and minds of the Clary's Grove boys was vital to the process by which he maintained his status as the ideal American statesman to most historians. This showed that, despite Lincoln's choice of the law as a vocation and his political and personal friendships with bankers and businessmen, he was linked to the vital experience that forged American democracy.

Scholarship has moved on since those times, and the frontier experience has greatly diminished in importance in the works of American history. The residue of this once important story remains in Lincoln biographies. Oscar and Lilian Handlin's recent *Abraham Lincoln and the Union* notes that Lincoln was "Equally at ease with the boys in the Clary's Grove gang and with the Reverend Cameron." A more important book, Stephen B. Oates's fine *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, carries the idea a bit farther. Describing Lincoln's campaign for the legislature in 1836, Oates says, "On the campaign trail, Jack Armstrong and the Clary Grove boys sang Lincoln's praises and helped keep order at his political rallies." Oates merely states explicitly what is implied in most of the Lincoln literature that preceded his book.

Jack Armstrong may have campaigned in 1836, but he did not vote, either in the state election in August or in the national election in November. And the Clarys were certainly Democrats. John, Spencer, and Zack Clary voted in the New Salem precinct in 1836. Spencer and Zack voted for William L. May and for the seven Democrats seeking seats in the Illinois House. John Clary split his ticket, voting for Stuart, Lincoln, and three other Whig aspirants to the legislature as well as for four Democrats running for the legislature. The Clarys voted in the poll outside New Salem. The other families associated with the Clarys have never been precisely identified, and the Clarys and Armstrongs may not have spoken for all the "boys." Nevertheless, this is not the stuff of which loyal campaign workers are made, and it seems almost certain that the Armstrongs and Clarys were no part of Lincoln's canvass for the Illinois House of Representatives in 1836. Politically, Lincoln was much more at home on the streets of New Salem than in Clary's Grove.

Whigs and Democrats in the Developing West

New Salem was solidly Whig. In the Presidential election the following November, the town's voters gave 65 votes to Hugh Lawson White and only 34 to Martin Van Buren (only one poll book for the precinct exists). Dr. Allen, Caleb Carman (at whose house, probably the Trents' former home, the poll was located), Robert Johnson, Jack Kelso, Lincoln, Joshua Miller, Dr. Regnier, and Martin Waddell voted for White. Alexander Ferguson and the Trents (who had apparently moved outside town) voted Democratic. Mentor Graham, who also resided outside New Salem, voted Whig.

Lincoln left New Salem for Springfield before the next election. In 1838 he again ran successfully for the Illinois legislature. New Salem had changed. Its citizens shared with most other residents of northwestern Sangamon County a



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 3. New Yorker Martin Van Buren's lack of popularity in the West spurred Whig organization in 1836.

desire to form a new county with, of course, a new county seat. Lincoln and the rest of the Long Nine, busy with internal improvements bills and the drive to move the state capital to Springfield, were unresponsive. New Salem's residents registered their dismay at the polls in 1838. The Whigs lost ignominiously. Lincoln led the Whig candidates for the lower house of the legislature with a paltry 31 votes out of 122 (almost double the total of any other Whig candidate for the Illinois House but not even a third of what the Democratic candidates got). Even Lincoln's local popularity could not overcome the disappointment of New Salem's citizens. John Todd Stuart, who was immune from the county-division conflict in Washington, ran ahead of Lincoln with 39 votes but well behind his Democratic opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, who gained 81 votes. A few remained faithful to Lincoln (Waddell, Kelso, Carman, Miller, and Graham), but even they split their tickets, usually voting for Democrats for the other legislative seats. Feeling for division of the county all but obliterated party regularity.

Lincoln was gone from New Salem by then, and his popularity and that of the Whig party in the rest of Sangamon County swept him to victory anyway. It is the experience before 1838 that is important, and it really is important. This is not a quaint exercise meant to add some of the bright color of partisanship to your next tour of New Salem State Park, though lack of attention to party politics is a notable failing of historical reconstructions, which usually ignore partisanship for the sake of a bland patriotism. This is a step in the reconstruction of Lincoln's early political environment.

That environment is looking more Whiggish every day. We know that Lincoln's father was a Whig and that his cousin was a Whig. We now know that the village in which he chose to make his independent way in the world was Whig. There is no anomaly in Lincoln's affiliation with the Whig party. The tendency to associate the frontier with democracy and democracy with the Democratic party is a hangover from the days when the West was thought to be the key to the American experience. Lincoln was a son of America's frontier, all right, but the West was politically and socially complex. When Lincoln moved to New Salem, he left his Whig home for a Whig town.



Politics

Perspective

A forum — ideas — analysis — opinion

Chicago Tribune, Saturday, February 15, 1986

Section 1 11

cc: MARK NEELY

Lincoln, a great political operator

WASHINGTON—Abraham Lincoln was a man who rose above politics, many Americans believe; no mere partisan, our Abe. That is why politicians striving to appear presidential like to twang the mystic chords of his memory.

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo traveled to Springfield this week to speak to the Abraham Lincoln Association on the "unfinished work" referred to in the Gettysburg Address. Cuomo's self-written speech was reverent, respectable—at times eloquent—and studded with all the right quotations.

The speech also was brought forth in banality, misconceived in its central theme and dedicated to the proposition that no historian has studied the life of Lincoln since the mythmaking of Carl Sandburg.

Like so many eulogists before him, Cuomo evoked the image of the Great Emancipator of the slaves, the president who expanded national power to help the poor and the advocate of what the governor called "the immensity of the fundamental ideas of freedom and self-determination . . . and always, at the heart of his struggle and his yearning was the passion to make room for the outsider. . . ."

Suspend oratory for a moment. If the work of historians Randall, Donald, Fehrenbacher, Current and Oates has any meaning, it shows that Lincoln's central idea was not to free the slaves but to enforce majority rule; not to permit secession's peaceful "self-determination" but to wage war for disciplined democratic Union.

True, Lincoln advocated freedom and equality, and the 13th Amendment is his real monument. But not until after 18 months of civil war and a congressional act to confiscate rebel property did he see abolition as his official duty; and his assurances to worried white workers in the North that he had a plan to ship freed blacks to "congenial climes" in Africa and Central America can hardly be described as a "passion to make room for the outsider."

Lincoln's most articulate critic was the man elected governor of New York, Horatio Seymour, who excoriated Lincoln's assumption of war powers as unconstitutional and demanded an end to arbitrary arrests, the closing of newspapers and the jailing of Democrats who dared to oppose the war. Cuomo failed to quote him.

While this year's eulogist was misreading the central Lincoln purpose and twisting the legend to serve his own purposes, a political scientist at the same gathering impressed Lincoln scholars with a

William Safire

paper on the partisan life of Abraham Lincoln.

In "Always a Whig in Politics" [Lincoln's political self-description], Cornell's Joel Silbey argued that the young Lincoln was a model local politician, a loyal Whig standing for the protective tariff and the national bank; an orthodox Whig against the Jacksonian Democrats in Congress; and a faithful practitioner of patronage in the White House.

"He was fully woven into the partisan fabric of his time," Silbey says. "He was a total political operator—a party hack. But so what? . . . What emerged was a responsible party system. . . . The wiles and commitments of the party activist and regular are, therefore, not easily denigrated."

Lincoln the party hack? Sounds like heresy, but Silbey draws on the work of this generation's historians to make his case that party loyalty and outspoken partisan opposition turn out men and draw issues in a way that may now be out of fashion but were vital in Lincoln's day.

That practical, compromising Lincoln, working within the Whig and then the Republican Party to achieve power for great purposes, is rarely used as an exemplar by high-mindedly nonpolitical orators today.

Just the opposite: We think of the political dissension in the North during the Civil War as divisive and harmful to the Union effort, with Lincoln having to jockey between the radical Republican abolitionists and the conservative Democratic civil libertarian governor of New York [Seymour, not Cuomo]. Most of us assume that party politics is a liability in warmaking, and that the one-party Confederacy had an advantage in mobilizing a national campaign.

But the absence of a two-party system weakened the South, as Columbia's Eric McKittrick showed: Jeff Davis had no way of enforcing political obedience in the states, as Lincoln did. The clash of parties turns out to be the great instrument in protecting Lincoln's "central idea" of majority rule.

That calculated internal activism needs a new birth today. If Lincoln could speak at Springfield now, he would show us how a great politician is able to rise above the usual rising above politics.

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ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATURE.

In the summer of 1834 he made another race for the Legislature, and was elected. He had to borrow money to buy suitable clothing for his appearance in that body. Vandalia was then the capital of Illinois, and the Legislature drew thither all the representative men of the State. Lincoln was thus enabled to make many valuable acquaintances and to familiarize himself with political affairs. He there met for the first time Stephen A. Douglas, who was acting as a lobbyist, and whom he described as "the least man he had ever seen." At this session Lincoln remained quietly in the background, contenting himself with the introduction of a resolution to secure to the State a part of the proceeds of sales of public lands within its limits. After the adjournment he returned to his law books and surveying, and began to have confidence in himself and to make definite calculations in the line of further political honors. He was re-elected to the Legislature in 1836, after a very exciting campaign. In his published declaration of principles at this time he said: "I go for all sharing the privileges of the Government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females)." He also said that he should vote for Hugh L. White, of Tennessee, for President. The Legislature of 1836 was a memorable one, and Lincoln was one of its recognized leaders. He served two more terms after this, being at both sessions the Whig candidate for Speaker.





STORIES OF ILLINOIS



POLITICAL campaigning in Illinois in 1830 was quite as strenuous as it is at the present time, although the population of the commonwealth was about half that of Chicago of to-day. In actual figures 157,447, and lay mostly between the cities of Alton and Peoria, principally on the rivers and creeks. Along the Mississippi River to Galena were some settlers, others had located along the Illinois toward Chicago and the Sangamon River country had been settled, but there was a great tract of wilderness uninhabited between Galena and Chicago. General

Jackson and his friends were in favor and during the four preceding years all general elections had indicated that sentiment. The large majority in the legislature was composed of Jacksonians and the followers of "Old Hickory" were almost idolatrous in their loyalty to the leader. The opposition was one of personal feeling and dislike and the principles of government were rarely discussed by either side.

August was the month in which there was to be held an election for governor. John Reynolds, formerly a judge of the Supreme Court of the state, was a candidate, and so was William Kinney, the then lieutenant governor. The spite and malice of party was the dominating influence and the height of ambition at the time was to secure election to the legislature. Jackson sentiment was in the ascendency and was so prevalent that an anti-Jackson man had no chance of election to Congress, either as senator or representative, while the governorship was practically conceded to the adherents of the hero of New Orleans.

Both Reynolds and Kinney were of the dominant party, for parties had not then been so thoroughly drilled and consolidated as is the case to-day. Some preferred one candidate and some the other, but the anti-Jackson men were more favorable to Judge Reynolds than to his opponent.

Lieutenant Governor Kinney was of the old sort of preachers. His morality was not so pinched as to prevent him using all the common arts of a candidate for office according to the rules of the game as played in those days. It is said that he went forth on his electioneering tours with a Bible in one pocket and a bottle of whisky in the other. As a contemporary expressed it, he was armed with "the sword of the Lord and the spirit," and he was so versatile that

he could preach eloquently to one set of men and drink heartily with another, thus making himself agreeable to all, regardless of their varying shades of opinion.

In those days the local option sentiment was not yet born and the quantity of liquor consumed per capita was the joy of the distiller. The dispensation of intoxicants by candidates for office was an indispensable element of success at all elections. A Prohibitionist would have been fortunate to have received his own vote. In many counties the candidates would hire all the groceries at the county seats and other villages of considerable size, where the electorate could get whisky without cost for several weeks before election day.

To the groceries, during the weeks of the political canvass, the voters in all the neighboring country came to the county seats on Saturday nights to see the candidates and hear the news. Unfortunately for the gossips and the saloon-keepers, the rural free delivery of mail and newspapers has put an end to all this. The candidates came also and from wagons, benches and stumps made their harangues, whence the phrase "stump speech." The stump speeches over, the drinking bouts were in order, and long before night a large portion of the community would be drunk and disposed to stagger about town, cursing, swaggering, swearing, yelling, cavorting about with cries for their favorite candidates, arguing their merits with their fists and having the time of their lives. Then, sometimes at daybreak, they would mount their horses, ride through the town or village like frenzied imps, and finally disperse for their homes. Campaigns at that time were largely studies in capacity.

In those days the politicians were divided into two factions of Jacksonians. The "whole hogs," being the out-and-out, thorough-going and original Jackson men, and the nominal Jackson men. Lieutenant Governor Kinney was a "whole hog." Possessed of a vigorous understanding, a keen intellect, he was a warm and true friend and a bitter, vindictive enemy. He was witty, merry and jovial. He loved fun and was highly esteemed by his neighbors, friends and acquaintances. The anti-Jackson men hated him, and with good reason, and while they did not especially care for Judge Reynolds they supported him because of their hatred of Kinney.

Judge Reynolds was good-natured, easy and of a gentler order. His education was classical—he was one of the few really polished men of the time in the state—and possessed considerable ability. He was a good politician and a clever campaigner. He did not flaunt his learning, and to hear him in conversation and during his public addresses it would not be supposed that he could do much more than read, write and cipher, although at the time such accomplishments were supposed to constitute a very learned man. He had been a farmer, a lawyer, a soldier, a judge and a member of the legislature. His life had largely been passed on the frontier, among a frontier people, and he knew their ways and

their requirements. He knew the catchwords, the old sayings and the figures of speech invented by vulgar ingenuity. He appreciated the educational deficiencies of a backwoods people, was possessed of their common vocabulary and had embellished it with some deft phrases of his own manufacture. He could go as close to the edge with a story as Uncle Joe Cannon, and he spoke a language peculiar to himself on all public occasions.

A man of remarkable good sense and shrewdness for the circle in which he chose to move, possessed of a ready eloquence, a fertile imagination and continual mirthfulness, his pleasantries when mingling with the people were as well received as those of Billy Mason of the present. His heart was kind, he harbored no resentments and

he was ever ready to do a favor. But to make a brief statement of fact, he was elected governor by a handsome majority.

It was during the administration of Governor Reynolds that the famous Wiggins loan of \$100,000 for the purpose of redeeming the notes of the old state bank was passed by the legislature and the credit of the state saved. But the action of the general assembly caused a storm of indignation and protest and sent many a rising politician to his political grave. Many people affected to believe that Wiggins had purchased the entire state and the destruction of really great, true and honest public men was the rule for some years. The people generally wished to repudiate the very money which they had previously clamored for and had received.

This unpopular legislative act had not been equaled but once before. Once the Illinois general assembly passed a law for the improvement of the breed of cattle and provided that little bulls were prohibited, under severe penalties, from running at large. No one realized that a hurricane of popular indignation was to result, but it came nevertheless. The people took sides with the little bulls. The law was denounced as being aristocratic and designed to favor the wealthy classes who, because of their money, were possessed of larger bulls and were to profit by the destruction of the small. And then some one raised the question of equality as applied to bulls whatever their size and the generous hearts of the people went out to the little bulls and embryonic statesmen were crushed because of their attitude toward the petite steers. No two acts recorded in the history of state legislation wrecked the hopes of so many politicians as the "Wiggins loan" and "the little bull law."

One of the curious things in politics developed at the session of the legislature at this time. The state treasurer was chosen by the general assembly. Judge Hall was the candidate of the Kinney men, while Judge Dement had the support of Governor Reynolds. Hall was a violent anti-Jackson man, but had edited a newspaper which favored Kinney. Dement was an original Jacksonian, but had done everything in his power to secure the election of Judge Reynolds to the governorship.

The legislature contained a majority of Jackson men, most of whom had been opposed to the election of Judge Reynolds, but the union of Reynolds' Jackson friends with the anti-Jackson members constituted a small majority. The Kinney followers were the whole-hog men of the party, but they fought manfully for Hall, while the anti-Jackson folks stood manfully for Dement. It was a change of positions and candidates seldom seen in politics.

Daniel P. Cook, first attorney general of

Illinois, and whose name was given to the county of which Chicago is the capital, was elected to Congress in 1819 and continuously re-elected until 1823, when he was beaten by Governor Duncan. He was a man of rare talents, a well-bred gentleman and one of the remarkable figures of his time. Probably the most accomplished representative in Congress from Illinois, he rose to high reputation, and during his last session was chairman of the ways and means committee. To his services the people of the state are indebted for the donation by Congress of 300,000 acres of land for the construction of the Illinois and Michigan canal.

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At the national election of 1824 General Jackson, John Quincy Adams, William H. Crawford and Henry Clay were candidates for the presidency. Not one of them received a majority of the electoral vote. The election was thrown into the House of Representatives and Mr. Cook gave the vote of Illinois to Adams, thereby electing him. Jackson had received more electoral votes than any other candidate. He had received two in Illinois and Mr. Adams but one, and the cry was raised that he had been cheated out of his election by bargain, fraud, intrigue and corruption. They resented his defeat with indignation and camped by day and by night on the trail of those who had opposed him. For years there had been attempts to defeat Cook. John McLean tried for his seat, then Elias K. Kane and afterward Governor Bond, but without avail. The defeat of Jackson cemented the old opposition to the accomplished congressman and Governor Duncan was brought out as a candidate against him. Because of General Jackson's great popularity and the resentment of the people owing to his vote for Adams, a hard and bitter fight resulted in the retirement of Mr. Cook and the election of Governor Duncan to Congress by a small majority.

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At that time Governor Duncan was a thorough Jackson man, one of the "whole-hog" party, but when Jackson as President attacked the United States bank and vetoed appropriations for the Maysville road and the improvement of the Wabash River, Duncan left him. When Governor Duncan had identified himself with the opposition to Jackson it raised a storm among his old neighbors and friends and a most interesting document of the time is this protest, only a part of which is quotable:

"Now, Governor Duncan, we Jackson men took you up when you was young, poor and friendless; we put you into high office and enabled you to make a fortune; and for all this you have deserted us, and gone over to the Adams men. You was like a poor colt. We caught you up out of a thicket, fed you on the best, combed the burrs out of your mane and tail, and made a fine horse of you; and now you have strayed away from your owners."

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This homely letter indicates a sentiment that has not undergone any considerable change even to the present day. Changes of political relations are likely to be viewed with disfavor and but little allowance is made for altered circumstances or new alignments. Among fierce partisans there is an oblivion to changed conditions and no consideration for the fallibility of human judgment. The man who changes his party as the result of mature, careful and candid examination of political questions is likely to be shelved. As a general rule so-called political principles are adopted in youth, when judgments are weak and usually spring from mere prejudice or from attachment to friends. The party label once applied is a difficult thing to erase.

HENRY BARRETT CHAMBERLIN.

Minor Election the Turning Point of Lincoln's Career

Candidate Made Short
Speeches and Told
Anecdotes

By R. P. HOWARD
Associated Press Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Feb. 12 (AP)—

Abraham Lincoln's career as a successful politician and lawyer started a hundred years ago with his election to the Illinois House of Representatives.

The year 1834 was the turning point in his life, Lincoln students said today as his 125th birthday anniversary was observed in the home town of the Civil War president.

He went into politics and decided to study law, definitely taking up the legal profession as something better than his work as store clerk, postmaster and deputy surveyor in the village of New Salem.

Young Lincoln was just 25 years old when he campaigned successfully as a non-partisan candidate for the legislature.

Historians have little information on the specific issues expounded by Lincoln in 1834. An autobiography by Lincoln, however, says that it was during the campaign that Major John T. Stuart, another candidate, started the future president on his legal career. As told by Lincoln:

"During the canvass, in a private conversation, he (Stuart) encouraged Abraham to study law. After the election he borrowed books of Stuart, took them home with him and went at it in good earnest. He studied with nobody. He still mixed in the surveying to pay board and clothing bills. When the legislature met, the law books were dropped, but were taken up again at the end of the session."

The winning appeal for votes was typically Lincolnian, with the candidate making short speeches, relating anecdotes and personally soliciting the support of new friends made during the campaign.

History records that it was not uncommon for Lincoln to stop a fist fight before starting a speech.



LINCOLN'S FIRST BALLOT CAST FOR A DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

Poll Book at Springfield, Ill., Shows Record of Its
Preference—Slavery Question Led Him to Align
Himself Definitely With Republicans

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Feb. 10 (Special Correspondence) — That Abraham Lincoln, elected to the Presidency of the United States on the Republican ticket, once voted the Democratic ticket is brought out in an examination of the old poll books

days. Little campaigning was carried on, nor was there a chance for ticket peddling or ballot-box stuffing. Before two austere gentlemen, seated at a table, with poll book before them, Abraham Lincoln is said to have appeared to indicate his choice of candidates.

Simple Voting Method

One sheet of paper registered the votes of all. The names of the candidates appeared across the top and the election clerks had only to write A. Lincoln on the left side and ask him his choice, which they indicated by a check in the proper column while Lincoln looked on.

It was for James Turner, candidate for Congress, that Lincoln cast his vote in this manner. Although there were no party symbols on the ballots at that time and the voting was purely verbal, James Turner was a Democrat and was so designated in the election of 1835, when he succeeded in being elected to Congress.

That "Lincoln's personal background at that time was that of Jacksonian democracy" is not to be wondered at. He, like many other boys, had, upon reaching the age of 21, accepted the policies of his father's political party. Thomas Lincoln was a staunch Jacksonian Democrat and remained such during his lifetime.

Favored Democratic Issues

In his campaign as candidate for the General Assembly of the State of Illinois in 1832 on the Whig ticket,

Lincoln expressed himself freely in favor of many Democratic issues. Internal improvement was one of the strong planks in Jackson's policy, and Lincoln gave his unqualified support of such a movement in his own county, addressing the voters in his district during his campaign on "The Public Utility of Internal Improvements."

In the state Legislature as a Whig man, he was not reactionary, as were many Whigs, but in most instances voted for the measures proposed by Democrats. He succeeded in his efforts to gain state support of internal improvements and to pass laws against high rates of interest on loans.

In 1833, Lincoln accepted the postmastership of New Salem from a Democratic appointment of Jackson's. Although he knew absolutely nothing about surveying, Lincoln was named by Calhoun, later a Democratic candidate for the Presidency, as deputy surveyor.

Lincoln was beginning to have his doubts about politics, however, and accepted Calhoun's offer only on the promise that the new position would involve no political obligation and that he might continue to express his political opinions as freely and as frequently as he chose.

Lincoln was early interested in the slavery question which was fast becoming a political issue. In a public speech, he announced his definite support of the Republican Party which had been organized on the opposition to slavery.



